

182 with men and women of Swazi clans. There were two Ngoni practices
581 which could be regarded as directly contributing to marriage as a
182 binding process within the society. One was the inheritance of widows
581 by a man's brothers. No formal marriage ceremony took place and if
587 the widow was elderly it was primarily a method of providing for her
needs. If she was still capable of bearing children, however, this inheritance ensured that she would continue to produce offspring for the family she had married into, and that her relationship with that family would be maintained. Thus ties which appeared to have been broken by death could be re-established. There were two stages in the reintegration of his widows into a man's family and clan after his death. The first was the ceremony of widows 'seeing their brothers-in-law' after the mourning was at an end, when beer was brewed and they took off and burned their mourning caps. The second was the ceremony of being inherited, when the widows offered snuff to one of their husband's brothers whom they were willing to marry.

182 Another Ngoni practice was that of giving an *nhlansi*, a substitute or
581 additional wife. If, after a marriage had taken place and cattle had been
585 handed over, the wife appeared to be barren, her family might give
another daughter as *nhlansi*, without further transfer of cattle, to bear children for her older sister whose house she entered. These children were always referred to as children of the house of A, the earlier married wife, even if they were borne by B, her *nhlansi*. Sometimes, even if the first daughter given in marriage bore children, an *nhlansi* might still be given without additional cattle being transferred, because the bride's family were pleased with her treatment in her husband's village and wished to compliment the man as a good husband.

58 There were four main stages in Ngoni marriage, in all of which the houses played an essential part. The first was the selection of partners and securing the consent of the families; the second the negotiations from the betrothal onwards, centring round the transfer of cattle; the third the series of feasts culminating in the marriage feast itself; and the fourth the assimilation of the new wife into her husband's family, house and village.

● 584 The selection of a marriage partner might take place in more than one way. There was direct courtship by the man; there was an indicated choice by the girl; there were marriages arranged by the parents; and there was direction of a son by his parents towards a suitable partner.
[582] In addition to clan exogamy and parallel cousin prohibition, there was in pre-European days a prohibition upon marriage between children of age mates in the same village. For girls of Swazi clans marriages were generally arranged, though informants insisted that in most cases the personal preferences of both partners were considered. A young man of a Swazi clan was told that in one village there was X, in another Y, with whom a suitable marriage might be made. Having taken this hint, and

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found opportunities for visiting the village and looking at the girl, and having decided in her favour, he then proceeded to court her along the following recognised and definite lines: 584

1. He courted the girl and if she was willing she eventually agreed to marry him.
2. He informed a member of the *gogo* house of his father's family, usually an older brother of his father.
3. This elder informed the man's father.
4. At the father's request, this elder went to the girl's village and sought out a corresponding elder of her family, usually an older brother of her father and always someone belonging to the *gogo* house.
5. This elder in the girl's village informed her father and mother and, when this was done, told the elder from the man's village, who then went home.
6. The girl's parents asked her if she agreed to the marriage and, if she gave her consent, they considered the matter and finally gave their consent.
7. The man's elder returned to the girl's village and the girl's parents told him they had consented and he then went home again.
8. He returned soon with a beast, called 'the snuff box', as a gift from the man's father. This elder now had several companions with him, but no one from the man's immediate family circle or from his house.
9. The beast was killed and the betrothal feast was held in the girl's village, after which her parents and the elders of her village said, 'We have snuffed.'
10. The man's father sent another elder to 'call the girl' and she was then addressed as 'daughter-in-law'.
11. The girl's father and his brothers decided what the *lobola* should be and informed the man's parents how many beasts they wanted.

Men of the *gogo* house in each village played the major part as go-betweens in the negotiations between the two families, opening the way for the new relationship which was felt to be full of difficulties. Once the betrothal feast had been held, the leading function of the *gogo* house gave way to more direct participation by the man's house, where the male members had now to find the cattle for the *lobola*, the amount of which had been fixed by the girl's family. This amount was in direct relationship to the status of the girl's family and clan. In the 1930's for a girl of the royal clan it was up to fifteen beasts; for girls of other Swasi clans from three to nine beasts; and for girls of non-Swasi clans from one to three—the variation depending on the status of her father in his village, and on the house from which he came. It was to the herd belonging to this house that the cattle of the *lobola* were allocated. The

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584 period within which the handing over of cattle was completed varied according to the demands of the girl's father and the capacity of the man's father to find the required number. Informants agreed that when only a few beasts were demanded, the transfer took place before or immediately after the main ceremony. In addition to this formal transfer agreed on and carried out as part of the marriage contract, there was also an informal reciprocal transfer which had two main purposes. At the time of the main ceremony the bride's party brought with them a beast, called *mwando*, which was put into the herd of the bridegroom's mother's house to which the bride would henceforth belong. Later, when the two families ate together for the first time, one or more additional beasts were brought from the girl's former house and put into the herd of the house to which she now belonged. In this way, the new wife began to have cattle in the herd of her mother-in-law's house which were known as hers and which would be taken to form a new herd when she went out with her husband to his *lusungulu* village. As soon as these cattle were in the kraal of the house to which she now belonged, the new wife was able to eat *amasi* in her husband's village, which she had not been allowed to do since leaving her father's village.

571 In the series of feasts which marked the stages in the marriage relationship and which facilitated the coming together of the two families, 585 the major part was played by the *indlunkulu* in each village. Many households in the girl's village shared in the preparation of food for the betrothal feast, but it was assembled when cooked and divided out by the woman owner of the *indlunkulu*, assisted by the men and women belonging to the girl's father's house. The next feast was in the man's village, and formed part of the main ceremony, before the bride's party returned to their home. The third feast was to celebrate the 'showing of the hearth-stones', when the young wife was allowed to cook in her husband's village for the first time. The food was collected in her parents' village and carried to her new village, where it was cooked by the women of the house into which she had married, and served in the courtyard of the *indlunkulu*. In the two final feasts—the *mwencengo* which was a beer drink, and the *izinyongo*, a feast of beer and food—the beer was brewed and the food collected in the wife's village and cooked and eaten in the courtyard of the *indlunkulu* in the husband's village. These two feasts finally broke down the barrier between the parents-in-law and were the first occasion on which they ate and drank beer together.

[602] 585 The main ceremony (*mitimba*) had three distinct parts.¹ The first part included the preparation of the girl in her own village (*ukucongca*); the entrance of her party into the man's village and the presenting of snuff

¹ I was present at an *mitimba* in Ezemveleni in the northern kingdom when the traditional ritual carried out in full was combined with a church wedding. The bridegroom was a man of the Dlamini clan from Swaziland, who had been adopted by Chief Mtwalo and had built a hut in the *cipilele* of the big house.

THE THRESHOLD OF ADULTHOOD (1)

returning from work in the south about every two years or so, even if it was only for temporary residence in the village, mitigated, though only to some extent, the social disintegration and upheaval caused by the absence of so many young men. *The practice of* 464
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In pre-European days, girls waited to marry for five to ten years after attaining puberty. For high-born Ngoni girls a further 'pre-marriage' ceremony and ritual took place immediately before marriage. This was after the girl and young man accepted by her as a 'lover' had been courting for some time but before any formal betrothal took place which involved the approach of the two families through intermediaries, and the discussions about the transfer of cattle. The Ngoni said that this pre-marriage rite was the equivalent for the girls of taking the head-ring for the men, because when it was held it was a public declaration that marriage was now possible for the girl, and she was acknowledged as having reached adult, that is married women's, status. 582
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584
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This ceremony began by the senior women of the girl's home sending for her father and saying to him: 'This child is now grown up. She is ready to be prepared to enter the state of adulthood.' One of the Ngoni names for the ceremony meant—'staying in the hut as if fasting'—a ritual practice associated with rain-making by the Paramount, and with taking 'medicines' for strengthening a new Paramount or chief on his accession. The girl, with her companion, spent two or three days in a hut, hidden behind upright mats curved so that no one could see round them. They were naked except for a long soft leather cloak worn over one shoulder and tied under the right arm. During this seclusion they had food brought to them by the senior women of the girl's house. While the girls were hidden away the village women cooked quantities of meat and brewed beer to entertain friends and relatives of the girl's father. During the feasting and drinking the senior women, with the men, danced the special dances and sang the songs associated with this ritual. Some of 885
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CHILDREN OF THEIR FATHERS

177 of the emphases in training boys and girls. This was especial-
 561 ly the case in the regulation of relations between the sexes,
 867 but new emphases were also needed in the knowledge and
 competence of young adults before setting up their own
 households. Boys and girls from this stage onwards were in
 fact in Ngoni culture thought of as young adults. They had
 passed out of childhood through the physical change at
 puberty, and though for a year or two that made little difference
 in their way of living, they were now regarded as in
 training for what lay ahead of them. For that training the
 senior members of their father's family still felt responsible
 and exercised control. But the emphasis in the training given
 was on what adults should know, how adults should behave,
 what adults should be able to do. For the rest of this chapter
 128 we shall follow up the new emphases in guiding and to some
 extent controlling relations between the sexes, and in the
 following chapter the emphases on cultural knowledge and
 on technical skills.

582 In the all-important sphere of heterosexual relations, there
 • 584 were certain social controls among the Ngoni which operated
 in the selection of a mate and in the form of courtship
 leading to marriage. Prohibited sex relations and prohibited
 835 marriages set up a pattern of avoidance between brothers
 582 and sisters, between parallel cousins, and between members
 of the same clan, and in former days the prohibition had
 extended also to the children of men of the same regiment.
 581 In selecting a mate the Ngoni preference was for someone in
 another village, for someone of an equal ranking or higher
 clan, and among Christian families for a young man or girl
 either already baptized or under instruction. This last preference,
 581 urged strongly by the missions and by Christian
 parents, was often difficult to reconcile with the preference
 182 for a high-ranking clan connexion. This was illustrated in
 the case of a young teacher, whose parents were Christians.
 He found himself being given contrary advice about choosing
 a wife. His father died, and his grandfather, an ex-

THE THRESHOLD OF ADULTHOOD (1)

warrior, was responsible for advising the youth. He indicated seven villages in which there were girls of good family whom he might go and have a look at. He urged him not to marry 'a girl who belonged to another nation', meaning another group, not Ngoni. He wanted him to marry one of several girls in a collateral branch of the royal clan, for whom the youth would have to give several head of cattle in the marriage transfer. The grandfather was quite prepared to sacrifice several of the cattle from his herd in order that the youth might make a good marriage. The young man's mother and his teachers in the mission wanted him to marry a Christian girl. In the time after harvest he went visiting with his age-mates, and saw a girl he liked the look of at a wedding dance in another village. He was particularly attracted by this girl's quiet and dignified behaviour, and by the fact, discovered through a 'go-between', that she had been to school and could read and write. The girl was at that time not a baptized Christian but under instruction. She was also not of an Ngoni clan, but of one belonging to a neighbouring ethnic group. He pursued his inquiries and found that her parents had been brought up in an Ngoni village and 'knew Ngoni customs because as children they had grown in Ngoni hands'. He married this girl, greatly to the disappointment of his grandfather, who felt that if the father had been alive he might have been able to find possible choices for the boy which would have reconciled the Ngoni ideal of marriage to a high-ranking clan with a Christian background.

In pre-European days there had been a series of 'dynastic marriages' between the royal clan and the leading clans and the desire to link the aristocratic families in this way was very strong still. It was always alleged that the girl had the right to refuse a suitor if she did not like him. I found several cases however in which the girl's refusal had been overruled by the men of her father's house who desired a 'dynastic marriage'. In two of these cases the girl was finally carried off to her husband's village for the marriage ceremony after

CHILDREN OF THEIR FATHERS

- 584 a strenuous resistance, during which one of them earned the name which stuck to her ever afterwards of 'the biting spider'. Considerations in choosing a mate, both for youths and girls, were not only influenced by the Ngoni desire, especially strong among the senior people, for linking Ngoni clans and families together by marriage. The high proportion of young people, boys especially, who had been to school and were Christian, weighed the scales in favour of an educated Christian wife or husband. As always, however, the factor of personal liking was very strong. Attraction first, and then liking based on further acquaintance, was held as most important by the youths and girls themselves. It was partly the question of the transfer of cattle to seal the marriage contract which inclined the young men to listen to the advice of their elders, for they were dependent on them, at least in the first instance, for providing the cattle.
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836 The other direction in which social control operated in
584 relations between the sexes was in the forms of courtship tolerated and permitted. In pre-European days, and for a long time after the missions came, the age of marriage was, as we have seen, postponed for many years after puberty. In those days there was a recognized and socially accepted pattern of sexual freedom before marriage, which we have already mentioned. A girl could indicate to a young man, who had recently joined a regiment, and had shown in various ways that he was attracted by her, that she was willing to take him as a lover. Often this relationship led eventually to marriage between the two, but it was not always the case. These two slept together from time to time in the dormitory, practising limited intercourse. The fear of being deflowered and still more of being pregnant before marriage acted as a
[848] very strong deterrent to the girls not to let the young man, in the Ngoni phrase, 'harm her in any way'. If this occurred the girls knew they would have no pre-marriage rite and no full public wedding ceremony, and this would bring shame not only on them but on their father's family and house.

THE THRESHOLD OF ADULTHOOD (I)

The missionaries, and through their influence Ngoni Christian teachers and ministers, tried to put a stop to this form of courtship. It was very difficult to convince Ngoni elders and young people that a practice which had been considered socially correct and was under some measure of social control, was now wrong and must be given up. They saw it as something quite distinct from casual and promiscuous intercourse, which they discouraged and despised. A young Christian teacher, speaking of his own youth, said: 'The Christian rule forbade boys and girls to sleep together at night and to play as our fathers played. We did not keep those rules, and we visited girls at night who wanted us, but we were careful not to harm them.' The Ngoni Christian leaders who were aware of the problems on both sides finally threw their weight into advocating much earlier marriages while supporting the carrying out of the private puberty rituals. As we have seen, marriage became usual at about sixteen for girls and from eighteen upwards for youths. This as a rule, though not invariably, ensured that the girls were virgin at marriage which was a very strict Ngoni requirement. But it brought in its train a number of other difficulties which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

contributed by the whole nation, were not found among the Ngoni. 000

Informants are agreed that in the old days young men and women married whom they were told and never attempted to make their own choice against their parents' will. From evidence available this seems to be an oversimplification. It seems likely that individual choice mattered less in those days than it does now, but it cannot have been entirely inoperative. It is said that each regiment of men used to flirt with its corresponding women's regiment, and that marriages sometimes followed. Wiese says that among the aristocratic families a woman had the right to choose her own husband, but that this right was dying out and it was becoming the practice to marry off daughters so as to secure the most marriage cattle and maintain upper-class endogamy.³ It is true that on the evidence of genealogies there do not seem to have been many marriages between very aristocratic women and the most recently captured men, and that therefore we are justified in assuming a tendency towards upper-class endogamy, but this tendency seems not to have been very strong and indeed there never was a clear-cut upper class but instead a method of ranking families in terms of ethnic origin. My informants never suggested that a man would marry his daughter so as to bring in as many cattle as possible, and it seems unlikely that this was ever a common motive.⁴ 14 581 565 580 [563] 581

A girl was expected to be chaste before she was married. From the procedure adopted by the Zulu and from information from other Ngoni groups, it seems likely that girls were examined at marriage to check that they had not been deflowered. Rattray records this among the Ngoni of Southern Nyasaland,⁵ and Read makes a similar statement.⁶ My own informants had such faith in the sexual rectitude of the past as contrasted with the promiscuity of the present that it was difficult to establish what they really thought happened. It seems that unmarried people were allowed intercourse *inter crura* and that this was considered not a violation of chastity. The whole question has been obscured by the conflict of values between the South-Eastern Bantu leaders, whose view appeared to have prevailed at the time, and the recent captives from the Cewa and kindred peoples, who believed that a girl would die if she did not copulate at puberty. We shall see the outcome of this conflict when we come to discuss modern marriage. 836 [191] 83 [191] [578]

As might be anticipated in a system in which marriage is a transfer of fertility, a wife was expected to be fertile. If she was barren special procedures were adopted to validate the substance of the marriage. A man could appeal to his wife's relatives for another 842 595

³ Wiese, op. cit. 'Expedição . . .', p. 473 and 'Geschichte . . .', p. 191.

⁴ See below, p. 120.

⁵ Rattray, *Some folk-lore stories and songs in Chinyanja, with English translation and notes*, S.P.C.K., 1907, p. 115.

⁶ Margaret Read, 'The Moral code of the Ngoni and their former military state', *Africa*, xi (1938), p. 6.

842 woman, who was sometimes a younger sister or a junior father's
595 daughter. This woman then became a linked co-wife (*nshanzi*)⁷
subordinate to her barren sister. If the linked wife was also barren
then the man could demand another one. The barren woman was
never sent back to her own relatives but continued to live with her
husband. Children of the linked wife were allocated to her and she
587 became responsible for their upbringing. Similarly if a wife died
before she had borne a child a linked co-wife replaced her.

842 If the man was sterile he used to arrange for a friend to sleep
837 secretly with his wife so that she should conceive. The friend was
rewarded with a beast after a child had been born but the reason
for making the reward was kept secret. If a seedraiser was caught
he was killed for committing adultery, despite the fact of his having
been called in by the husband.⁸

837 As well as being fertile, wives were expected to be chaste. On
684 this point the evidence is clear. Wiese states that adulterers were
always killed;⁹ all subsequent writers have agreed with him. I
was told that if the woman's husband was not an important person
he was sometimes placated with a present of cattle. If the husband
persisted in referring the matter to the chief the senior lieutenants
of the chief might intercede on his behalf, if this was the man's
first offence. Otherwise the man and the woman were both killed
by one of the senior lieutenants.

522 The approved mode of behaviour for women was chastity before
[831] marriage, submission in the choice of husband, and fertility and
fidelity in marriage. These obligations were clear-cut and definite
and of universal applicability. The obligations of affines towards
602 one another were not so straightforward, and their fulfilment was
a process marked by ritual transfers of cattle and carefully prescribed
modes of behaviour. In particular the relationship of a man to his
606 wife's mother was altered progressively from one of strict avoidance
to openly expressed friendliness. The stages in the process represented
the gradual acceptance of the man into the family of his wife's
parents as a son-in-law, the father of their daughter's children.

586 Marriage was entered into without compulsion on either side, but
[584] the right to terminate it was held in the man's group alone. A
woman could not on any ground secure a divorce. All my informants
agreed on this point. A man could divorce his wife at any time by
sending her back to her own kinsfolk, giving her a small present as
an indication that he had divorced her. If he had offered bridewealth
for her, her kinsfolk were under an obligation to provide him with a

⁷ Read, in her 'Moral code', p. 18 translates this word (*nshanzi*) as 'substitute'. Lancaster, 'Tentative chronology', p. 79, gives the word as *nshlanze*. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, p. 39 translates the Swazi word *inhlanti* as 'subordinate co-wife'. I have chosen the translation 'linked co-wife' as there are other kinds of subordinate co-wife who are not *nshanzi*, and some *nshanzi* are not substitutes.

⁸ See below, p. 34.

⁹ Wiese, *op. cit.* 'Expedição . . .', p. 471, and 'Geschichte . . .', pp. 189-90.

new wife to replace the divorced woman. Divorce however seems to have been rare, and in the genealogies I collected I met with only one instance of divorce at this period. 586

3. Payments and ceremonies

Betrothal¹⁰ was a preliminary to marriage but was not compulsory. A girl was betrothed only if she was sought in marriage before puberty and the marriage then did not take place until some years after puberty. If a girl passed puberty without being betrothed she was subsequently married without a betrothal period. A man was expected to make presents to the girl he had betrothed and he began to adopt avoidance relationships towards her parents. If after puberty the girl or her parents wished to break off the engagement they could do so but were then under an obligation to return the man's presents. The ceremony at which an aristocratic girl after puberty chose her own husband has been described by Wiese.¹¹ 584

In the marriage itself there are two main stages marked by two distinct transfers of cattle. The first transfer was called 'snuff-box', *mfuko*. The name of the payment is based on the practice of begging snuff from one's friends and acquaintances and indicates something trifling and not recoverable. It consisted of one beast. Payment of 'snuff-box' established the man's rights to bring an action against an adulterer but it did not give him the right to take his wife away to his own village nor to the custody of any children she might bear him. These rights were obtained only by the payment of bride-wealth, *malowolo*,¹² which consisted of from one to a dozen beasts depending on the status of the woman's father. Both payments, 'snuff-box' and bride-wealth, were made by the man or, if he was a young man, by his father to his wife's father. No specifically defined relatives were obliged to help a man find his marriage cattle but a man with few cattle of his own looked for assistance to the head of his cluster. Similarly there were no definite rules of distribution of the marriage cattle among the woman's relatives and the matter 583

¹⁰ The verb is *ku-homeka* for a man, and the passive *ku-homekwa* for a woman. Cf. Bemba *uku-hobeka* and *uku-hobekwa* in Richards, *Bemba Marriage and Present Economic Conditions* (Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, No. Four), p. 61.

¹¹ In his later paper he calls the ceremony *inyamwali*. In the earlier paper he calls the ceremony held at first menstruation *inhamwali* and says that after this ceremony the girl went with others to choose the man she liked. The vernacular words he mentions are presumably connected with the modern Nyanja *cinamwali*, which is now sometimes applied to three ceremonies held (1) at first menstruation, (2) six months later, *cinamwali caciwaya*, and (3) after first pregnancy, *cinamwali cacihulu*. The abstract noun *unamwali* is sometimes used in place of the concrete *cinamwali*. Cf. Wiese, op. cit., 'Expedição . . .', p. 473, and 'Geschichte . . .', p. 191; Rattray, op. cit. pp. 102 and 190; Stigand, 'Notes on the natives of Nyasaland, N.E. Rhodesia, and Portuguese Zambesia, their arts, customs and modes of subsistence', *JRAI*, xxxvii (1907), p. 121; Read, 'Tradition and prestige among the Ngoni', *Africa*, ix (1936), p. 472; Young and Banda, *Our African Way of Life*, pp. 22-4.

¹² Cf. the Zulu verb *uku-lobola*; also Rattray, op. cit. p. 199. 881

587 her pro-husband. If there was no younger brother the pro-husband was one of her husband's junior patrilineal kinsmen of his own generation. She could not refuse a pro-husband although her husband's brothers could choose not to provide her with a pro-husband if they so wished. The widow continued to live in her own cluster where her pro-husband came to visit her. Rattray states that widows waited one year after their husband's death before their re-marriage was settled²³ and this is nowadays the traditional procedure. Wiese, however, writes that widows waited four years before they could marry again.²⁴ The children begotten by the pro-husband were regarded as children of the dead man for social purposes but the identity of their genitor was not disguised. They called him *father*, but this was as much because he was their dead pater's brother and their mother's pro-husband as because he was their genitor.

851 The same principle of substitution was applied to betrothal. If a man died before marrying a girl to whom he was betrothed, the betrothal passed to a younger brother or a classificatory brother. If a girl died before marrying the man to whom she was betrothed, the betrothal passed to a younger sister. Unlike the operation of the levirate, however, the children of this type of marriage were regarded as the children of their genitor and genetrix for all purposes, as though their parents had been betrothed to each other in the first place. Again, unlike the levirate, if a man considered himself too old when his betrothed became marriageable he might give her instead to his son as a wife. The children of this marriage were also regarded for all purposes as the children of their genitor and genetrix.

587 Occasionally a woman whose husband died young, went to live with a man who was not her dead husband's brother, real or classificatory. The pro-husband gave a goat to the woman, but if bride-wealth had been offered for her by her first husband, the pro-husband could never gain permanent custody of the children. The children that she bore by him belonged to the segment of the dead man, took his descent name, and when old enough went to live in his segment. When the dead man's kinsmen claimed these children, they gave a beast to their genitor 'to straighten his back', that is, for his labour in begetting them. This arrangement is in some ways analagous to Nuer widow-concubinage²⁵ but with the important difference that the pro-husband, although not a kinsman of the dead man, had rights in the widow as a wife and an exclusive right to her sexual services. It seems that the status of a widow living in this kind of union was not low. In one instance I heard of, very aristocratic families were involved, and the arrangement appears to have been

²³ Rattray, op. cit., p. 97.

²⁴ Wiese, op. cit. 'Expedição . . .', p. 474, and 'Geschichte . . .', p. 192.

²⁵ Cf. Evans-Pritchard, *Some Aspects of Marriage and Family Among the Nuer* (Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, No. Eleven), p. 18.

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cousins. Whether a man decides to marry a cross-cousin or an unrelated woman, he still has to decide just exactly whom he will try to marry, and similarly a woman has also to make up her own mind about whom she will accept as husband. The initiative in choosing lies very largely with the couple themselves, and not with their parents and kinsmen. If a man is diffident about asking a woman to marry him, he may ask his father or elder brother to seek out a woman for him, or a woman may have a spouse presented to

Table IV. Marital status of females, by age, 1948-9

Age in years	Marital status							Total
	Unwedded	Wedded						
		Divorced women living alone	Widows living alone	Divorced woman living as concubine	Married women			
					HH	HA	HS	
0-4	58	-	-	-	-	-	-	58
5-9	65	-	-	-	-	-	-	65
10-14	54	-	-	-	-	-	-	54
15-19	20	-	1	-	14	9	1	45
20-24	-	3	-	-	10	11	-	24
25-29	-	1	-	1	17	8	1	29
30-34	1	-	-	-	14	8	-	23
35-39	-	-	-	-	19	3	1	23
40-44	-	2	1	-	13	1	1	18
45-49	-	-	2	-	13	2	-	17
50-54	-	3	-	-	7	3	1	14
55-59	-	1	5	-	6	-	1	13
60-64	-	1	8	-	3	1	1	15
65-69	-	2	8	-	1	-	-	11
70-74	-	-	5	-	1	-	-	6
75-79	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
80-84	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Not known	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	4
Total	198	14	31	1	122	46	7	421

Legend

HH (Husband at Home) Husband living within thirty miles of his wife, in a village, and not separated from her
 HA (Husband Away) Husband living permanently on a farm, or in Fort Jameson, or more than thirty miles away
 HS (Husband Separated) Husband living within thirty miles, in a village, but separated from his wife

her by her parents, but the general rule is that people seek their own partners. Certain rules have to be considered by whoever is trying to arrange the match. These determine which marriages are regarded as incestuous, and which marriages are preferred. The kinship relationship, age, ethnic group, and religion of the partner all have to be considered. With the passing of the regimental system, considerations of State no longer affect choice of marriage partner, except for near relatives of the chiefs.

A man may not marry anyone whom he addresses with a kinship term belonging to the first ascending or the first descending generation. This prohibits marriage between ego and his *mothers, fathers, mothers, brothers, affines, and children*.³ In his own generation he cannot marry his *child's parents-in-law* and he cannot marry any *sibling* who is not a *cross-cousin*. In the second ascending and descending generation a man may address his female *grandparent* and his female *grandchild as wife*, and he can, to a slight extent, joke and refer in general terms to sexual activities in their presence. But Ngoni regard it as a typical Cewa custom for a man actually to marry his female *grandchild*, and do not approve of such marriages among their own people. A man may fondle the breasts of his grandmother and suggest in the company of others at a beer drink that his granddaughter should marry him, but that is as far as this joking goes.

A man is entitled, and to some extent expected, to flirt with his female *cross-cousins*. We have noted above that the Nguni peoples from whom the leaders of the Ngoni kingdom were drawn did not allow cross-cousin marriage. By contrast the Cewa and Wisa peoples, who were captured in large numbers from about 1870 on, came from societies in which local organization was based on bilateral intra-village cross-cousin marriage. In villages where there are now many people claiming Cewa and Wisa descent there are many instances of cross-cousin marriage. This form of marriage is by no means confined to people of low ethnic status, and even the Paramount Chief has married classificatory cross-cousins. In the aristocratic families it is sometimes suggested that an important man might marry a cross-cousin while still young and unable to muster a large marriage payment and then later marry an unrelated woman as his great wife. No distinction is made between marriage with father's sister's daughter and with mother's brother's daughter. The somewhat equivocal attitude towards cross-cousin marriage is seen in the conflicting statements of informants about payments in cross-cousin marriages. Some say that no payments ought to be made, for are they not all one family (*banja*). If payments were made it would mean that the family had split. Others say that payments can and ought to be made and that provided the cross-

³ For the definition of these terms, see Barnes, op. cit. pp. 222 ff

lives for some years with a European may leave him and enter into a proper marriage. The favourite wife of a chief who died a few years ago had earlier been the mistress of a European.

Christians must abide by the rules of their church or risk ecclesiastical censure. A baptized Catholic man may marry only a Catholic girl or he will be suspended from receiving the sacraments. A Catholic woman must either marry a baptized Catholic or obtain dispensation to marry a catechumen. A catechumen of either sex can marry another catechumen or a pagan. In addition Catholics cannot marry if the marriage would infringe canon law. Catholic cross-cousins, therefore, can marry only by concealing their relationship from the priest. In the Dutch Reformed Church a baptized person, or a member of a class of instruction, cannot marry a pagan or a Catholic without being suspended. Other missions have similar rules.

Locality is of some importance in influencing a man's choice. The bigger the village he lives in the more likely he is to take a wife from within it, but the belief still persists that it is better to find a wife from outside one's own village if possible. In a polygynous household a wife married from her husband's own village still does not rank as high as one who has been brought in from outside, of whom it is said 'her husband had to walk to get her'. The mechanisms by which people living in different villages are brought into contact are numerous,⁴ but for finding a spouse the two most important are inter-village dance contests and visits to relatives. Teams of young people, usually all girls and young women, go from their own village to others in the vicinity to dance against the home teams. Young men stand around watching them and discuss among themselves the erotic possibilities of individual dancers. As darkness falls the dancers start back home, escorted by the young men who flirt with them on the way. At the weekends there are many young men back in the villages from their employment on the farms or in Fort Jameson and they sometimes gather into gangs of half-a-dozen or so, wandering from village to village in their best clothes, with dark glasses and walking sticks, looking at the girls' dances and trying to make assignations. This sort of flirtation is confined to the young and irresponsible, and it would be regarded as unseemly for a middle-aged man to pay much attention to the dances of young girls.

More respectable contacts are made by young people who go off to stay with their relatives in distant villages. Everyone has kinsmen and affines in many different villages, and it is the custom to visit back and forth for weeks at a time. A young man may go on several days journey to visit his relatives among the Cewa and Naenga tribes, or to live for a while with a relative working on a distant farm. While he is away, he may meet a girl whom he likes, and arrange to marry her. The dance situation does not provide

⁴ Cf. Barnes, op. cit. pp. 214 ff

628 much opportunity for a man to assess his sweetheart's domestic
584 efficiency and moral character, but he can get information on these
594 matters from other people who live in her vicinity. When he sees
a girl in a distant village where he is staying, he has more leisure to
see what she is like and can ask his own hosts about her character.
Girls visit in the same way as men, and if a girl is anxious to get a
husband and fears she may not find one, she may spend most of her
time visiting in different villages hoping to attract a suitable man.

[221] There is more time for visiting and flirting at the end of the dry
season when there is little work to do in the gardens, but marriages
are contracted throughout the year.^a

581 Young men say that what they like in a girl is a light skin colour,
832 a pretty face, and the ability to dance and to copulate well. Some
men, however, say that such a girl might be all right to run after,
but for marriage one would also need to know that she could cook
porridge. Women say they like a man who is well dressed, who
has a good job working for a European, and who has a parting in his
hair. Women sometimes wear medicines which are believed to
attract men, and men who have no good clothes may borrow the
clothes of others in order to attract women.

3. Sexual partners

593 The relationship between a man and his wife, at least for the
581 first years of their marriage, is spoken of principally in sexual terms,
and the sexual activities of the couple are more closely defined by
the marriage bond than are their residence and their economic life.
Informants say that the reason for the existence of marriage is
either 'the work in the house', a euphemism for copulation, or else
'clothes', that is, so that a woman may have someone to buy clothes
for her. It is, however, much easier to improvise alternative solutions
to the problem of clothing than it is to find alternative means of
sexual satisfaction without coming into conflict with law and
morality. Furthermore, while we have seen in the old days that the
main emphasis was on the fertility of the woman, this has now shifted,
and it is her skill in copulation rather than her success in childbearing
[842] that is emphasized. Fertility is still valued, but does not appear to
form so important a theme in ceremonial, songs, and gossip as among
other societies where the principle of unilinear descent has not
broken down, and where, therefore, fertility either of a man's wife
or of his sister, is a vital necessity for the maintenance of local
structure.

593 The husband-wife relationship is one in which the man is apparently
superordinate to his wife, but we shall see that in practice this
superordination is not as clear-cut as might at first appear. It is
furthermore a relationship in which there are certain prescribed
mutual obligations, so that if these obligations are neglected, it is

^a Cf. Young and Banda, *Our African Way of Life*, p. 69.

MARRIAGE IN A CHANGING SOCIETY Beyond the 59

Village The Native Courts deal to a great extent with matrimonial matters, and are responsible for issuing marriage certificates. The Administration is concerned to see that marriage stability is maintained, that women are not denied justice in marriage disputes, and that adultery and prostitution do not flourish. The missions are interested in the maintenance of monogamy and the development of Christian marriage. 692 581 777

An unmarried individual is under the tutelage of the person who rears him. It is true that sometimes people say that children are responsible for their own actions before the court, and that truant schoolboys can be made to pay their fines themselves, but in practice it would be a harsh parent who denied help to his son in such a predicament. He has a legal right to refuse to accept responsibility for his child's actions, and public opinion would support a parent who washed his hands of a recalcitrant son who had given much trouble to his father for many years. A parent should however be very patient with his children, hoping that in the end after he has borne with their escapades they will become mature and wise. Where the child is in charge of another relative, such as a parent's sibling or a grandparent, the same attitude of adult towards child is expected. Some children live peaceably with their parents, and accept their direction in important affairs, while others move off of their own accord to more congenial kinsfolk or to earn their livelihood as best they can as juvenile labourers on the tobacco farms. 858 593

In relation to marriage this variable pattern of dependence and independence shows itself characteristically. Girls are on the whole more dependent on their parents than boys, yet some girls become economically independent and seek their own husbands a few years after puberty, while some men in their late twenties ask their parents to find wives for them. Between these two extremes the majority of the young population seek their own sexual partners but turn to their parents for assistance in arranging the marriage. 593 584

An unmarried girl depends on her kinsfolk for shelter and food, and it is they who take action on her behalf to protect her interests and to defend their own rights in her. If she is seduced and becomes pregnant her kinswomen find out from her the name of her lover. It is said that a girl will sometimes suggest the name of a lad whom she dislikes rather than reveal her true lover. Other people say that a girl will indicate the name of the man she wants to marry, whether or not he is the genitor of her child, in the hope that he will then marry her to avoid trouble. The girl's father, if he is available, takes the matter to court if he cannot get satisfaction from the alleged genitor, and it is to the father that the lover pays a beast¹ if he is found guilty. The child belongs to the girl's kin. The girl's parents may try to persuade the lover to marry their daughter if they think he will make her a good husband, but if he does not find favour in their eyes they remain hostile to him. We shall see later 882 848 684

¹ Called *cidumu*.

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684 that if the lover is thought to be very desirable as a husband, the girl and her parents will begin to act as though she had in fact been married by him. Few cases of seduction come before the courts, perhaps because of the fact that it is only pre-marital pregnancy that can lead to action in the court and not merely pre-marital copulation. If the lover agrees to marry the girl it is in the interests of her kin to let him do so, rather than take the matter to court when they may be awarded more damages but where also their daughter will appear as a foolish and indiscreet person. It is said that some girls hand on to their parents some of the presents they receive from their lovers, and that therefore the parents take no action against the lovers, but I have no information as to the extent of this practice.

The kin of a woman have therefore an interest in her sexual activities before she is married, and to a lesser extent a man's relatives have a similar interest. The main concern of a man, however, is that he shall not get himself into such serious trouble that he has to find the money for damages in the court and that he will not be forced to marry an unsuitable girl whom he has impregnated.

2. The marriages of children

581 At marriage itself a person's relatives may act on his or her behalf in choosing a spouse, and the factors that influence their choice are different from those which operate when people choose their own spouses. A man's relatives stress that the wife-to-be must be hardworking, polite to her superiors and not given to promiscuity. The fact that a girl begins to sleep with her lover may influence her lover's parents against her for they argue that if she sleeps so easily with their son she will soon tire of him and run off after someone else. They pay more attention to the character of her parents and siblings and look to see what sort of wives her sisters have made. Similarly the parents of the girl may look critically at the young man and they too argue that as he has already begun to sleep with their daughter he will soon begin running after other women and leave his wife 'alone in her hut'. If a relative of the girl has already married a relative of the man and that marriage has not been a success, their kinsfolk may try to prevent a second marriage.

Case history 4

164 Absalom, who works in South Africa, wrote to his brother saying he wanted to marry Mary. The brother, who was married to Mary's sister, approached Mary's father who said that he could not agree. Mary's father later said that he opposed the marriage as Absalom's brother had infected his wife with syphilis and he did not want another of his daughters to marry into that family.

- 584 If a man is away working he may write home and ask his father or some other relative to find a wife for him. A marriage arranged in this way does not necessarily find favour with the man when he finds out who his bride is to be, but a number of soldiers successfully

married women chosen for them by their kinsfolk while they were away during the 1939-45 war. If the woman selected for him by one relative is unsatisfactory, a man may turn to another relative for help, as is shown in the following incident. 584

Case history 5

Ahab, a young man of about twenty, was working in Fort Jameson. He wrote to his father in the village enclosing money for the legalization payment, asking that his father should find him a wife. His father spoke to a friend living in another village who had an unmarried daughter. The friend agreed that his daughter should marry Ahab, but the girl said that she wanted to see Ahab before making up her mind about him. Ahab was told of the arrangement but refused to agree to it, saying that he knew that the girl chosen was a prostitute. [581]

Ahab then asked a classificatory grandmother to find him a wife. This woman found a girl and when Ahab came home from work he and a friend went for a walk to the girl's village to spy her out. The friend, on seeing the girl, advised Ahab against marrying her and the negotiations again fell through.

Ahab asked his grandmother to try again and this time he approved of the girl selected. The legalization payment was made and the girl came to live in Ahab's village with his grandmother. After a week or so, she was taken by the grandmother and other important women of the village into the township to start living with Ahab. [591]

On the other hand a man may desist from marrying the girl of his choice in the face of parental opposition. For example, the first girl that Amos found for himself was opposed by his father because her father was a sorcerer; the second on the ground that her parents were unreliable and that she was a cross-cousin, a point against her in that Amos's brother had married a cross-cousin and the marriage was not a success; only with the third choice did the father agree to his marriage. [591] [581]

The initiative in arranging a marriage lies with the man and his kin rather than with the woman, and a girl who goes too much out of her way to attract a husband risks her reputation and may be regarded as a potential prostitute. On elopement, it is the woman who runs off to the man's village or to his place of work, and it might be expected that her relatives would initiate action to bring her back or to claim damages for abduction. Sometimes a man does take action against the lover with whom his daughter has run away, and the lover pays a beast. Another man, however, may take no steps to follow his runaway daughter, merely refusing to recognize the existence of any marriage between her and her lover, and sometimes denying any knowledge of the lover's name. If the woman shows no sign of returning to her own village, efforts may be made to bring her children back to her parents to be brought up. Sometimes a man who has eloped with a woman later approaches her parents, apologizes for his precipitate action and makes them gifts, after which they may decide to recognize him as a son-in-law. 583

If a man shows his intention of marrying despite the disapproval of his close kin, they can retaliate by not helping him financially, 584

584 by not visiting him, by refusing his presents of beer, and even by refusing to speak to him. Provided the man can find the money for the legalization payment himself, they cannot prevent the money from being handed over. The woman's kin are in rather a different position for they can try to prevent her from marrying against their wish by refusing to accept the legalization payment. 584 583 It will be seen from Table VIII that this happened in four per cent (5/135) of the marriages in our sample. The woman's father may sometimes think the sum offered is too small and may refuse to accept until it is increased. The man can either give way and offer the larger sum or, if he thinks the demand is excessive or beyond his resources, he may start living with her without any legalization payment at all. He is then not so sure of his rights over his wife as he would be otherwise and his wife's parents may try to break up the marriage. Should quarrels lead to a divorce it will be easier to obtain because of the absence of payments.

583 586 The woman's relatives may, however, refuse to accept the offered legalization payment irrespective of the amount. They do this if they feel that the marriage has no chance at all of success, either because of the unsatisfactory character of the man or of the well-established unreliability of their kinswoman. By refusing the payment they hope to protect themselves against the call for damages which they feel sure is bound to come when their daughter commits adultery and her husband wants to divorce her. Even at the monetary level the amount they are likely to get as legalization payment is only thirty shillings while the damages they will be called upon to find will be three pounds. If, however, no legalization payment has been made, then the divorce should be granted without the award of damages against the woman. Thus her relatives protect themselves financially by refusing the payment, but at the same time by so doing they are trying to avoid trouble in the group of kin and quarrels with their newly-found affines. If a man before making his legalization payment shows himself to be unsuitable as a husband, or if it is plain that his wife will not be satisfactory to him, her kin will not put any pressure on him to pay and begin to hope that the marriage will end before too much trouble ensues. If the payment is made, some of the woman's relatives may refuse any part of it offered to them, hoping thereby to avoid future financial responsibility for her adultery.

Case history 6

Job works in the township and had two wives. He then married the girl Rebecca. She lived with him in town for a month or two and then Job sent her back to her village to be taught to cook properly. Her mother's mother remarked 'Ever since she reached puberty we told Rebecca she must learn to cook properly but she took no notice. The other wives of Job often laugh at her.' Her mother's mother's elder sister said 'It is a good thing for us that we did not accept any legalization payment from this man.' A month or so later the marriage broke up and Rebecca was divorced.

Where a woman has already troubled her relatives by her adultery, they may try to avoid further expense by refusing the legalization payment offered for her.

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Case history 7

Rachel had had two husbands and had been divorced from them both. She had also lived with a White for some years. In 1946 she began to live with Eean, who already had three wives. In 1948 Eean approached an important man in Rachel's village and asked him to act as intermediary as he wished to offer the legalization payment to Rachel's brother. This man refused to do so, and in the end Eean approached his brother-in-law himself. The brother-in-law said that he had known his sister Rachel a long time and she was just a prostitute. He would not take the money for her. Eean said he would speak to his wife and ask her to change her character. Eventually the brother-in-law agreed to accept the thirty shillings offered.

Although the kinsfolk of the man or woman can exercise social pressure to prevent a marriage it is difficult for them to force a girl to marry against her will, and impossible in the case of a man. We have noted that in the old days, according to informants, people married whom they were told and did not refuse. Even if this was ever true, it is true no longer. A man can move off to the towns in the face of pressure and a woman can always run away to other relatives if her parents are insistent on an unwanted marriage. The Administration does not allow girls to be married against their will, but I do not know of any recent instance in which it has intervened on this issue. A girl's relatives can show their anger by abusing her and by scaring off her own preferred mate, but they cannot detain her against her will and they cannot force her to go through the ceremonies of marriage. They cannot appeal to the court to punish the girl for disobedience.

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In some instances pressure is put on a man by a woman's kin to force him into marrying her. If a woman bears a pre-marital child, and it is known that the genitor is an important man or chief, her kinsfolk begin to adopt towards the genitor's family the patterns of respect and avoidance which would be appropriate if he were their affine. This procedure may be adopted although it is plain to people in general that the genitor has no intention of marrying the woman. If it is unsuccessful in forcing the hand of the genitor, the formal attitudes of the woman's kinsfolk come to be generally ridiculed and they abandon the pretence.

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So far we have considered only the attitude of kinsfolk towards a proposed marriage and the legalization payment associated with it. The factors influencing the acceptance or refusal of bridewealth are different. Bridewealth, when offered, is not often refused. Table V shows that in our sample this happened in only one out of 360 marriages. We must remember that bridewealth is paid only in about four per cent of all marriages, and that a man is usually on good terms with his affines and has lived in peace for many years with his wife before he offers it. A youngish man may seek the

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ponding payment through which they can attempt to control the relationship between the couple. Yet both groups of kin are interested in the successful outcome of the marriage, and therefore attempt to influence the choice of marriage partner.

3. Formal interaction

In the formal negotiations that precede a marriage, and in the ceremonies that mark its stages of development, the kinsfolk are always involved. The married couple depend on their kin for economic assistance, and are under obligations to help their kin. The place of residence of the couple is determined by the disposition of their kin in different villages. If the man is a labour migrant his interests are represented by his rural kinsfolk. In general it is the fathers of the couple who are most directly concerned, if they are available, but in all Ngoni situations in which a man (or woman) appeals to his kin for support there are no hard and fast rules about the genealogical positions his supporters should occupy. If a man's father is old he turns to his elder brother. If his genealogically close kinsmen live far away, he turns to those who live nearer although they may be further removed from him in genealogical terms. If there is no male kinsman available he may seek the support of an old kinswoman.

The formal situations which require the co-operation of kinsfolk are the matchmaking, the gall bladder ceremony (which we may perhaps regard as the wedding), the ceremony of first cooking, the hoeing party, the announcement of first pregnancy, the carrying of beer and the entry into the wife's mother's hut. Betrothal is another formal situation requiring the presence of the woman's kin, but as nowadays very few girls are betrothed, we shall omit this from our analysis. It will be recalled that even in the old days betrothal applied only to girls under puberty and that a girl who reached puberty without becoming betrothed proceeded to marriage without passing through any intermediate stage. The matchmaking, at which the marriage is arranged, is carried on in a formal manner but there is little ceremonial. The carrying of beer is a visit from one group to the other that can be repeated as many times as they wish, but all the other ceremonies occur but once in a marriage, if they occur at all. The hoeing party has a certain economic value but the other ceremonies are largely symbolic in content. As with the marriage payments, the marriage ceremonials can all be dispensed with and yet there be a marriage which to all intents and purposes is valid. What cannot be omitted so easily from a marriage are the patterns of respect and avoidance between the couple and their affines, particularly between a man and his wife's mother. Even here, however, there is some variation in practice.

The usual procedure in matchmaking is that first the man and the woman agree between themselves that they will get married. They reach this agreement in secret without reference to their kinsfolk

- 584 or friends. If the man is away working or in the Army he may make his proposal by letter. When agreement has been reached negotiations can proceed although they are carried on as if there had been no prior agreement and the proposal was entirely a new one.
- [593] A man tells his eldest brother of his intention to marry, or, if he is the eldest son, he may approach his father direct. He does not speak to his mother about this matter, for a man does not confide in his mother about anything connected with sex, but she is told of his intention by her husband. A man ought to tell his grandmother at an early stage, particularly the grandmother who reared him. A woman tells her sisters and her grandmother, and her eldest sister will tell her eldest brother. *The man's father or eldest brother may decide on who shall act as intermediaries in the matchmaking, or else the man may himself ask important people in the village to act. There is no definite rule as to who they should be, and either men or women or both may make up the party. Usually two or three people go, and a man will try and choose people who are reliable and sober and tactful. Marriage intermediaries do not have the same important responsibilities for the marriage as do the marriage sureties (or witnesses) among the Nyanja and Yao although they are known by the same term.⁶ The intermediaries go to the woman's village and consult her senior relatives. Traditionally they should go to the woman's grandmother, either her father's mother or her mother's mother, depending on who lives in the village and who is the more important. They tell her that they have heard that such-and-such a marriage has been contemplated. The girl's grandmother tells the girl's father that the intermediaries have come, and if nothing has arisen to jeopardize the marriage, the visiting party are told that all is well and that they must come back again. They return to their own village, and the next day, or the next week if it is a long way to walk, they go again, bringing with them a gift or sometimes the legalization payment. The gift or money is handed to the person leading the negotiations on the woman's side who passes it on to the woman's father. Arrangements are made about the gail bladder ceremony and a date fixed. The intermediaries then go back to their village.*
- [585] At the gail bladder ceremony the bride receives formal advice from her affines and the people in their village. Shortly afterwards she begins to live with her husband in either his or her village. If they live virilocally she does not at first cook for her husband, but the couple rely on food prepared by his other wives or his mother or grandmother. It may be up to a year later that the woman first cooks for her husband and husband's father, the latter commenting on her cooking. When she first becomes pregnant she is anointed by her husband's grandmother, and goes with a young girl from her husband's kinsfolk to announce her pregnancy to her own kin.
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⁶ Nkomo.

he has not been brought up by them but by some other relative. In particular a man is reluctant to discuss his affairs directly with his father if he can get his eldest brother to act as his intermediary. The eldest brother is heir to their father and it is considered that he should act as the channel by which the father is approached. He deals with proposals of marriage arising from his younger siblings and if he approves of them, he refers the matter to their father. This pattern of relations seems most marked in aristocratic families.

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2. Widows

While it is a man's eldest brother who helps to arrange his marriage, *le lele yomanga* brother who becomes pro-husband to his widow. We have seen that in the old days a widow was usually looked after by a younger brother of the dead man but she continued to live in her dead husband's segment, and the children she bore by her pro-husband were grouped with the children of the dead man. This can still happen but it is no longer the invariable rule. As in the old days, if bridewealth has been paid by the first husband and after his death his widow goes to live with someone else, the second husband or pro-husband cannot offer bridewealth and the children he begets belong to the dead husband and take his descent name.

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Some indication of the extent to which widows remain with their dead husbands' kin is given by data collected in two villages. All the women now living in these villages had between them experienced widowhood 31 times. In two instances (6 per cent) the widow had been cared for by her dead husband's brother; and in 11 instances (35 per cent) the widow took a new husband not directly related to the dead man. In the remaining 18 instances (58 per cent) the widow had not married again and was living alone.

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A man may die at any stage of his marriage. If he is betrothed to a girl and then dies, the betrothal passes to a younger brother. When the girl is old enough, the younger brother marries her as though she had been betrothed to him in the first place and the children he has by her are his own children. Similarly, if a betrothed girl dies before she is married, the betrothal passes to a younger sister.

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If a man dies after he has been properly married his widows have definite roles to play. For a month after his death, they must wear the signs of mourning, and they are in danger of *ndulo*²² if they commit adultery during that time. They must be ready to wail when distant visitors arrive to mourn. At the end of a month they brew beer, and there is a joyous party. A year after the death there is another party, and the fate of the widows is discussed. If none of the younger brothers or kinsmen of the dead man wish to look after the widows, they are free to go their own way, and there may be a formal statement of divorce. They are in any case now spoken

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²² See above, p. 68.

VII

MARRIAGE BY PURCHASE

- 584 I. An Angoni, when he has daughters, makes an arrangement with some man from another village, saying to him, "You are my friend, you must wed one of my children." Then the girl's father makes beer, and they go and summon his friend and set him in a hut by himself, and the father bids his daughters; "Go and pour out beer for the stranger." The father points out his child [to his friend], saying, "You will see she has on such and such a kind of calico, and then you will know that is the one." Then some other day he tells his child she must go and present herself at her future husband's. When the moon is full all the maidens of the village assemble and come by night to the man's village and sit down at the village court. They sit in a circle, the betrothed in the middle, and cover their heads with their calico. They tell stories and laugh that the villagers may know people have come to the *bwalo* court. Then some young man comes out, and says, "I have found something," and his companion says, "I go halves." Then an elder asks, "What is it?" And the young men reply, "The maidens have come." Then some of the women at the village are sent to ask the girls at the *bwalo* court what they have come for, and they do so, saying, "What is your business here." And they reply, "We have come for so and so." They are naming some very little child. So they ask again, saying, "Are you really meaning that child himself?" And they reply, "No, we mean his big brother." Then they go and tell the elders of the
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MARRIAGE BY PURCHASE

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village that "The people who have come to the village court are saying they wish so and so." Then the elders say, "Put them in a hut." Next morning they cook for them whole maize, the betrothed does not eat with them, and when the old women see she is dying of hunger, they take her to a hut on the outskirts of the village and give her beer.

II. On the following morning they from the man's village take an offering of two goats, and go with them to the girl's village. These goats are accepted; for they say, "They are only the spirits, and no doubt the price of the girl must be behind." When the young braves leave, they leave behind a child to guard the betrothed, and follow her about, and when they return to their own village they take other goats and go with them (to the girl's home), and when they come with them there they sit at the *bwalo* court, then one of the village elders makes a little gap in the grass fence (that surrounds all Angoni huts) and peeps out. When he sees the goats he tells the village chief that there are such and such a number, and the chief tells him not to receive them. Then the young warriors, when they have waited and waited, go off to their own village. At the outskirts they stand to await the escort of young girls, and then they go and say to the man who wishes to marry the girl, "They did not receive from us." So next morning they take more goats and go with them. The old man again looks out, and when he sees that more goats have come he goes and tells the girl's father, "To-day such and such a number have arrived." And the man answers, "Go and take them and put them in the kraal." (When this is done) the old man comes and takes the knoberry from one of the men (who brought the goats) and puts it in a hut, and the men follow the knoberry, and they cook

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431 porridge for them and it is refused, and they spear goats for them and they eat. Next day they go home. They of the girl's village tell them, saying, "You will hear from us." Now, if the malt for the beer be in readiness, they do not sleep many days, but if not, they let a moon pass. On the day on which the beer is strained they go and call the bodyguard of young warriors, and they come along with the husband (to be) to drink the beer. The man who is to marry the girl they go and hide away in a hut on the edge of the village along with his betrothed, and the beer for them will be drawn in a little pot.
- [273]

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[302] III. Now every one comes together at the village court and bring goats. The betrothed sits on a mat. Her grandmother shaves her head, leaving a round patch of hair on the crown. When she has finished shaving her one of the men from the man's village steps out and begins to kill some goats. Should a goat not die immediately it is beaten. Then the goats are skinned, and they take a spleen and let drops fall from it on the head of the girl, and then inflate all the spleens. They take the fat from the belly, and spread it in the sun to dry. Towards evening they take the girl and go with her to the Kuka hut, and there they take a frothy medicine, called *chitundu*, and the girl bathes with it, and her little watchman bathes also, and he (the child) takes the spleens and the fat, the inflated spleens are fastened on the girl's head and the fat over her shoulders and under her arms. The little child, when he has finished tying them on, is beaten by the men from the man's village (playfully). Then one of the village elders gets up and speaks, saying, "There you have your mother, we give her you to-day; she is subject to no disease, her illnesses consist of occasional headaches. Should she
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585 young wife is made cook beer, and on the day it is
[30] drunk the spleens are burned and the bead girdle
unravelling, and the girl will make bracelets of it.

VIII

MARRIAGE (*Chipeta*)

•584 I. WHEN a girl and a man love one another, they make each other presents in secret, and when this has gone on for some time, they say, "But let these things fly away on the wind now and be heard by people." Then the man goes and tells the elders of his village, saying, "Go and ask for me at so and so's. I would live with them, for I am miserable (here)." Then some of the elders go there to ask for him, saying, "Here we have seen a (girl's) basket, and we would remain with you, for where we are we are unhappy." Then the headman replies, "First of all you must return, when we have asked the child if she consents you shall hear again." Then the deputation go off home. The man calls his children, he sees the one who is almost a woman, and asks her, saying, "So and so have come and say they want you to stay with them." And the child answers, "Well, what can I say, words which you may speak I obey." And they from the man's village return again, saying, "We have come about that proposal which we mentioned yesterday; we are most anxious for what we asked." Then the chief says, "Let the man come, he shall live here, I do not refuse." And they go back home and tell the man, saying, "We

MARRIAGE (OHIPETA)

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went across there, and heard what he told us. He says you must go and live there." And the man says, "We shall do so, it's not far to the water." Then the old men (who are negotiating the affair) return there and say, "We shall stay with you, there is water, and it is not far away." And the village chief says, "Let him come, this is not some other land that eats up a man." Then the old men return, and bring their child and take him to the chief, saying, "Here is your man, and he has no other words [meaning complaining, bad-tempered words]; all he ever says is, 'Cook me porridge, for I am hungry.'" And the chief replies, "For our part, our one has not one little thing (against her), cooking is her forte and pounding flour, and, perhaps, even hoeing, but as to that we do not know for certain as we have not yet seen her with a hoe in her hand."

II. Then the old men return, going back to their own village, and leave the child. He must sleep in the quarters of the young unmarried men, and his wife will cook his food for him until he has built his hut. He does not cohabit with her. When he has finished building it, they put him in it. At the village where he is, he does not ever see his mother-in-law, they always run away from each other. When he says, "Now I am sick of this running away, let us 'uncover' each other." Then the mother-in-law cooks beer, and the son-in-law gets some calico, and they go and call the people from the man's village, telling them that now they wish "to uncover." Then the people from the man's village come and take the man and go with him to his mother-in-law's hut. His head is still covered with his calico and the mother-in-law's also is still over her head. Then the man's brother goes and uncovers the mother-in-law and takes the

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10. *Forbidden and Enjoined Unions (Ngoni).*

The Angoni are patrilineal, and in the case of a mixed Ngoni-Chewa marriage the child always takes the clan (*vide infra*, Section IV) of the father, whether bride-price has been paid or not. The children of brother and sister may marry each other, but not the children of two brothers or half-brothers, nor the children of two sisters or half-sisters. As with the Achewa, so also with the Angoni it is no longer considered incestuous to marry someone of the same clan. 611 582 614

11. *Forms of Marriage (Ngoni).*

When an Mgoni wishes to marry, he sends a male friend without a gift to inform the girl's father of his desire. The father calls his wife, male relations and headman to discuss the matter; and, if they agree to the proposal, the friend returns with the news to the prospective bridegroom who, several days later, despatches his *ankhose* with a present to the *ankhose* of the girl. There are always two *ankhose* on each side, neither more nor less. A father is ineligible; and brothers, sister's sons and fellow-villagers are generally chosen, as they are more likely to be at hand if required at any time. The present is only symbolic, and generally takes the form of a goat, though in the case of a wealthy bridegroom it may be a cow or something equally substantial. This part of the procedure is known as *ku-onga*, and as soon as the present has been received by the bride's father, the marriage is valid in law. 584 [583]

A few days later, the groom sends a friend to conduct the girl to his house. She comes with several elder women and other girl friends, but her mother may not join the party. The bridegroom provides for them a feast of beer and meat in commensuration with his wealth. He presents beads to his wife, this ceremony being known as *ku-tentetu*, and sends a cloth (known as *mhaka*) to her mother, after which the women return home on the same day without consummation having been effected. [574] [431]

About a week later, accompanied by a small boy, the man proceeds by night to his father-in-law's house, and is given an empty house, where he sleeps with his wife. He must avoid being seen by any of the villagers, and therefore departs before daylight, going to a neighbouring village for food and rest, and returning on the following night, when the same precautions must be observed. [833]

On the second morning he goes back to his village, and after two or three weeks sends a friend to fetch his wife. This time she comes openly, and sleeps with him for two or three nights in any available hut, after which she returns to her father. [833]

The husband then begins to build her house at his village, and to pay the bride-price. This process is known as *kulowola*, or *kupereka mabeka*. The *mabeka*, or bride-price, may consist of cows, or cash, or other goods; and it varies in value according to the standing of the parties. If the bride is fully grown, payment should be completed within four or five months. Nowadays, however, Ngoni girls are generally married shortly before they reach the age of puberty, and in such cases a year or two may be allowed; but when the husband is unnecessarily dilatory, his father-in-law may oblige him to build a house near his own and to live there until he has fulfilled his contract; and until the bride-price has been paid in full, he cannot expect his wife to reside with him permanently at his own village. 583 591 [582]

THE FAMILY

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said to be due to their definite knowledge of common patrilineal descent rather than due to the common name. At the other extreme are names such as *tomba*, *lungu*, and *pbili*, which are derived from the neighbouring tribes of the region and are very common and have no connotation of exogamy. 551
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Prior to the arrival of the Ngoni descent-names were inherited in the matrilineal line by the Cewa, Nsenga, and other tribes of the Eastern Province. Under Ngoni influence, the rule was reversed and the great majority even of recently incorporated Ngoni now bear the same names as their fathers. Some people do take the descent-names of their mother, as, for example, a child born in adultery who is not accepted by its mother's husband, or one whose father dies young so that it is brought up by a relative of its mother. As with the Tonga of Mazabuka, some descent-names have locally alternative forms, and in one instance men and women take different names.¹ 177
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Appeal is sometimes made for protection and help on the basis of a common descent-name, but this is not a very strong tie and is invoked only when no closer link can be found. The principal uses of descent-names are in polite forms of address and in connexion with beer-drinking. 602
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Marriage Payments

The initiative in choosing a spouse usually lies with the man. A woman who takes too much initiative in this matter is regarded, usually correctly, as likely to be unfaithful. In the old days marriages were more frequently arranged by the parents of the couple concerned, but now this happens only when the man is away. Men who are on the farms or in the mines send money home to brothers or fathers with instructions to find them suitable wives, and to offer the money as the legalization payment. During the 1939-45 War this arrangement was continued by soldiers who were away. 583
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The most important payment in connexion with marriage is that made by the bridegroom to the bride's father which I shall call the legalization payment.² This payment is the one that establishes unequivocally the right of the husband to damages should his wife commit adultery or be allowed by the court to divorce him. It must be observed, however, that damages may still be awarded to the husband under certain conditions where no legalization payment has 583
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¹ The name *swila* for a man becomes *swula* for a woman in certain areas.

² *Cinale*, no plural. Cf. Young, *Customs and Folk Lore*, p. 61.

249 near their farms, who go home every afternoon after work and come
464 back the next morning. Others employ women and children, and most
[854] boys work intermittently on the farms to earn enough to keep them-
[462] selves in clothes until they are old enough to go away to Southern
Rhodesia. Other boys work in their holidays from school.

466 To some extent people from the same village tend to go to work
together in groups on a farm. This is particularly true in the case of
the short-term labourers who sleep at home, since the choice of farm
is restricted to those in the immediate vicinity of the village. Here
sometimes the majority of the inhabitants of a village will turn out
under the leadership of the headman of the village and work for three
or four days on the same farm. Longer-term labourers may be attracted
to a farm by the presence of a foreman from their own village.

584 Girls also go to work on their own, and many marriages are made
as a result of encounters on the farms. Marriages made in this way
are not always recognized by the parents of the girl until the man has
brought her back to her village and formally approached her parents.

444 The villages near the farms, and to a lesser extent those near the
township, sell beer to the labourers, while the farms themselves buy
up most of the maize and other cereals that villagers have to sell.

464 The continual demand for labour on the farms leads to their serving
as a sanctuary for fugitives from social pressure of one kind or another.
651 For example, a native policeman was going round the villages obtain-
653 ing labour for the Administration for essential public works. He
[622] adopted the normal practice of imposing a quota of labourers to be
supplied upon each village and made the headman responsible for
seeing that his village quota was met. If the headman did not do this,
he enlisted the headman as a labourer. At one village the headman
told the policeman that his people had all run away to the gardens
when they had heard of the arrival of the policeman in the area. The
policeman warned the headman that either he must exercise his
authority over his people and order them back into the village so that
he could enlist them, or else the headman would be enlisted. He came
back the next day to see what had happened, and found that the head-
man had gone off to work on a farm. There is machinery for recovering
such people, but it does not work easily or quickly, and by the time
a man has been located and brought back, the reason for which he was
wanted may have fallen away.

691 Disputes between Africans on farms can be dealt with at the nearest
578 Native Court, but if the farmer wishes to enforce his rights under the